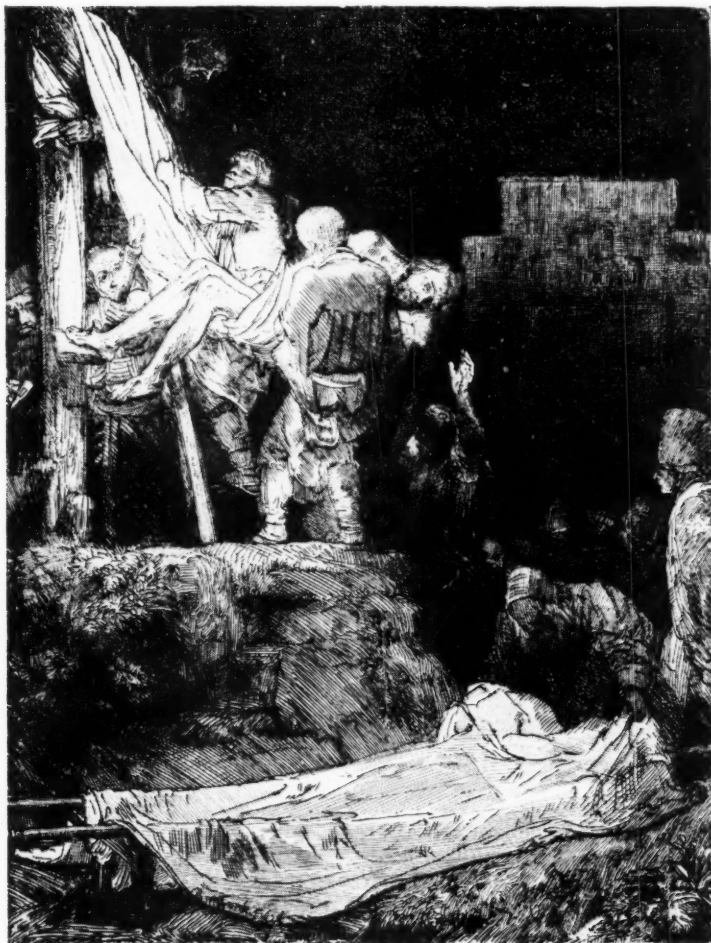


NOV 25 1938

Bulletin of The Detroit Institute of Arts of the City of Detroit



REMBRANDT VAN RIJN
1606-1669
THE DESCENT FROM CROSS BY TORCHLIGHT
DATED 1654

REMBRANDT'S "DESCENT FROM THE CROSS BY TORCHLIGHT"

A most significant gift to the Print Department has been made by the Founder's Society in the purchase of Rembrandt's etching, *The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*. The etching is signed and dated, 1654.

In 1633 Rembrandt made his first etching of the Descent from the Cross. The plate was unsuccessfully bitten, and for this reason his definite line gave way to a shadowy vagueness. This heightened the air of mystery so fitting to the telling of this dramatic gospel story, and may have suggested the idea of developing this effect. The second plate, made also in 1633, shows the same composition as the first though made on a larger plate.

In 1654 Rembrandt again chose this theme, and etched *The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight*. At a period when Dutch art was secular and the Puritan feeling hostile to the idea of religious art, Rembrandt turned again and again to gospel themes. His approach to the scriptures was simple and direct. Concentration on a cen-

tral idea portrayed with intensity of emotion, and the expression of human character, were the things at which he aimed in all his etchings of a religious character.

The Descent from the Cross by Torchlight is noble in composition. The moving pathos of the scene carries us beyond the grotesque figures, beyond the fact that the deep shadows and lighter portions are not perfectly blended. It is this power to arouse deep emotion which makes Rembrandt both an old and a modern master.

The importance of quality to a Print Department cannot be overstated. If we are to develop a truly critical sense in judging prints we must know fine early impressions, where the lines are crisp, and clearly printed. Our knowledge of great print makers must come from familiarity with their work at its best, and in the *Descent from the Cross* the Institute possesses a perfect impression of the work of a master etcher.

ISABEL WEADOCK

EASTMAN JOHNSON'S "IN THE FIELDS"

Another American painting of merit has been added to the collection of the Institute of Arts as the gift of Dexter M. Ferry, Jr. It is a characteristic work by one of the best, and up to the present time one of the least generally appreciated of American painters, Eastman Johnson. "In the Fields" (1) at once sums up all the artist's virtues: his technical training, his candour, and the advantages realized from the rational study of old masters.

Eastman Johnson, the son of the Secretary of State for Maine, was born July 29, 1824, in Lovell, Maine. At the age of sixteen he began work

(though since childhood he had drawn crayon portraits) in Bufford's lithography shop in Boston, where Winslow Homer was also employed. From his stay here he derived a virile draughtsmanship and a telling manner of using flat areas of light and shade. Leaving his tasks as a designer of bookcovers and title-pages, he returned to Augusta and executed a series of portraits for the Maine legislature, and in 1845, his father having moved to Washington, he established himself in the capital and continued his career with many famous members of the Senate as his models. In 1849 he sailed for Europe,

1. Painted on board, 17¾ in. x 27½ in. Exhibited at the Frazer Galleries, New York City, 1937.



EASTMAN JOHNSON
1824-1906
"IN THE FIELDS"

and enrolled in the Academy of Düsseldorf, then at the height of its fame. The academic training refined his draughtsmanship and instilled a taste for the realistically rendered sentimental anecdote. From 1851 to 1855 he worked at The Hague, occupying his talents with copying Rembrandt and painting portraits, with such success that he could have remained as court painter to William III. 1856 saw him in Paris, in the atelier of Couture. Returning to America he sought out the native scene in Wisconsin, Kentucky, and lastly, Nantucket. Paris and Düsseldorf had taught him to be tasteful in the arrangement of figures, to respect a realistic appearance and the proper amount of literary content; Rembrandt confided something of the secret of significant light, illumination which reveals the quality of form. At the same time, he far outreached the international academic manner, which reported so minutely "a generation that melted

away in tearful dreamings," and while Johnson is at times sentimental, the vitality of his subject matter makes any charge of affectation unjust. His commitments as a successful portrait painter did not prevent him from achieving a number of charming narrative paintings, "The Old Kentucky Home" (New York Public Library) and "The Wounded Drummer Boy" being perhaps the best known. In all such works his discreetness and inherent good sense keep them from oversentimentality.

Toward the end of his career he abbreviated his style, but always preserved a meticulous regard for visual fidelity. "In the Fields," painted during his Nantucket stay in the seventies, has a directness and simplicity rare, except for Homer and Eakins, in the 19th century. Accomplished wholly in warm browns, blues, red, and green, the possible monotony is neutralized by the wholesomeness and freedom of the

scene, the freshness of sparkling autumn air. It is illustrative rather than formal. The incident is of little importance. But withal the apparent sketchiness of execution, the drawing is sound and clear, and the figures are revealed in a bright, low-lying sunlight, laid on in bold areas which emphasize their form in the surrounding space.

As a painter Johnson stands between the highly personal realism

of Eakins and Winslow Homer's robust innovations, applying his excellent academic training to two major fields; the portraits of a whole generation of noteworthy Americans, and the illustration of themes close to American heart and history. When he died, in 1906, he left behind him an achievement which must eventually put him among the first of our native painters.

PARKER LESLEY

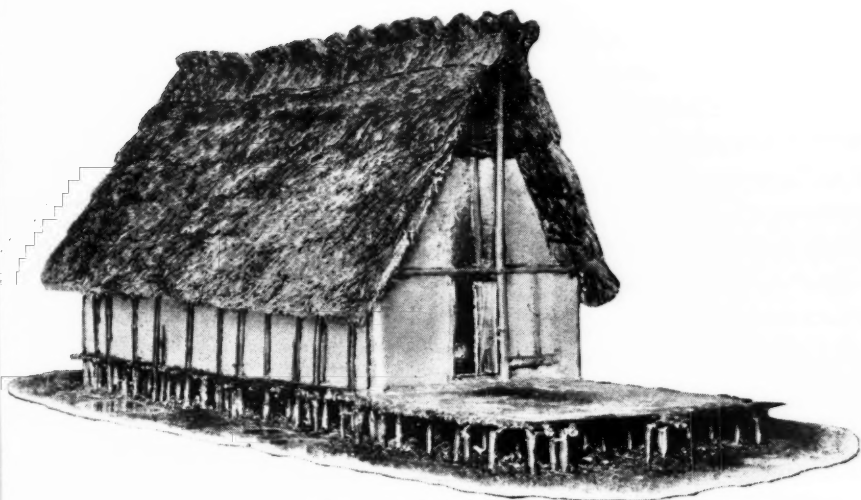
A NEW STUDY ROOM OF PALAEOLITHIC ART AND CULTURE

The prehistoric gallery of the Institute contains a small but very excellent collection of European neolithic artifacts. Hatcher blades, chisels, knives, daggers, and lance-points, usually of flint, are shown. Visitors find it difficult to understand the use of these tools and to visualize their original appearance, since the wooden shafts and handles are not preserved. The exhibit would have more meaning for the layman if wooden replicas of the original handles could be provided. For this reason a new study room has been arranged.

We have known for a long time through many observations on prehistoric sites of the New Stone Age in Europe that handicraft in wood played an important role in the daily life of more than 4000 years ago, and that carpentry was one of the principal arts. Therefore we can see that wooden objects in addition to pottery, if excavated, would give us an idea of the level of aesthetic feeling among neolithic peoples, for naturally the art was an applied one. Such woodcarvings clearly reveal that a sense of the beautiful was present even in the objects used in daily life.

Recent excavations in the peatbog at Feslersee in southwestern Germany

and at Wauwil, near Lucerne in Switzerland, have brought to light numerous wooden relics. Not only were the houses well preserved, making possible complete reconstructions, but handles and shafts of weapons and tools, boomerangs, spoons, ladles, beakers, bowls, troughs, canoes and oars were uncovered, so well preserved that they seem to have been in use only yesterday. These sites belong to the type known as Lake-dwellings. We know now that the houses of the Lake-dwellers were not erected, as was formerly supposed, over the water itself, but the piles and platforms, on which the houses were built were set at the ends of the lakes, thus not only protecting the houses against inundations during the spring but also from the dampness of the soil. As the climate of neolithic times was much warmer and dryer than it is now, the lakes were smaller. A new method of excavation made possible a complete knowledge of the sites. The water was dammed off from the area to be excavated, and then pumped out, the excavation then being carried out in the dry lake-bottom, permitting the study of the original stratification. This proved that the houses were standing on firm soil at the time they were inhabited.



MODEL OF A NEOLITHIC HOUSE
c. 2200 B.C.

The Museum was able to acquire models of houses, and copies of other objects in the original size, carved in the same wood the lake-dwellers used. This was made possible through the courtesy of Prof. Hans Reinerth, of Berlin, who excavated the sites in cooperation with the Modellwerkstatt des Reichsbundes für Vorgeschiede. The main model is a rectangular house with a porch on the gable side and a platform in front. Inside there were two rooms, the first was used as a kitchen, and contained the bake-oven. In order to show the structure of the oven a separate model is displayed; such ovens were built of willow twigs and wickerwork plastered on both sides with clay. The second room was a living room, and had, besides a fireplace, a ceiling, which prevented drafts from the thatch and formed a kind of attic.

One of the oldest villages ever excavated was unearthed at Tannstock in the Federsee area. Our model reconstructs the nine oval huts which formed the village, originally inhabited by fisherfolk. Fishing spears with one or two barbs, deerhorn points, fishing rods, and

harpoons with their throwing-sticks, are exhibited. By pollen analysis it was possible to fix the date of c. 8000 B.C. for the Tannstock site. The walls of the huts were constructed merely of bundles of birch twigs standing on end, the upper ends being covered with bulrushes or reeds. A model from Dulleried represents the perfection of this type of oval house, which dates from c. 3000 B.C. Immigration from Moravia about 2800 B.C. introduced the rectangular log house of the type seen in the Federsee area. The same type of houses, with *antae* or columns attached to either side of the door penetrated Asia Minor in the second millenium and became the prototype of the same form in Greek temples.

Among the tools exhibited are some very interesting carved ladles, the connecting link between the spoon and the beaker. A whole series of types are shown. They are utilitarian, yet their symmetry, pleasant curving lines, and carefully smoothed surface show that an aesthetic effect was intended. Among the weapons are boomerangs, significant not only because at Wauwil the first neolithic boomerangs were unearthed but also

because the curves of the form are perfect. The same perfection is present in the battle axes and hatchets. A copy of a flint dagger with its hilt of lindenbark and leather scabbard, found at Wiepenkathen, is additional evidence of the high level of neolithic handicraft. Tools used in agriculture: plows, hoes, the mortar and pestle, and kneeding troughs, are on display. A primitive sickle, made

display. A primitive sickle, made of a bent stick with flint flakes stuck into a cleft cut along its side, swingles, used to clean the threshed grain, the forerunner of the flail—a club—are also shown. In addition, a drill borer, used in making battle axes, and a stone cutter illustrate the technical mechanisms of the neolithic period.

GEORGE LECHLER

COOPERATIVE PROGRAM WITH THE SCHOOLS

Friends of the museum will be interested in the launching of a newly designed program of coöperation with the art department of the Detroit Public Schools, more fully integrated with the school program than any we have before been able to attempt. The program, which has been worked out by Mrs. Heath of our staff and Miss Mabel Arbuckle, Supervisor of Art Education in the Detroit Public Schools, involves group visits on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday afternoons. The museum's effort is closely correlated with the school program, so that the children will be prepared for

what they are to see and visits will be purposeful rather than casual. The program is so arranged that the Institute's collections will be explored from a number of different points of view in order to reach as many different temperaments and interests as possible. Naturally, the scheme is, in its present stage, experimental and exploratory. But friends of the museum will be glad to know that the schools are prepared to devote so much thought and careful planning toward including our collections in their educational effort, and will, we feel sure, wish us well in our effort.

EXHIBITIONS

Oct. 4-30: International Exhibition of Water Color Painting.

Alger House, Sept. 26-Oct. 30: French Drawings from the 15th to 20th Centuries.

TUESDAY EVENING LECTURES

Given by the museum staff in coöperation with the Archaeological Society of Detroit, Tuesday evenings at 8:30 in the lecture hall.

Sept. 27: *The Amerindian in Michigan*, by Emerson F. Greenman, University of Michigan.

Oct. 4: *Caravaggio and the Poetry of Discovery*, by E. P. Richardson.

Oct. 11: *The Narrative Element in Gothic Tapestries*, by Adele Coulin Weibel.

Oct. 18: *Alger House and Italian Villa Architecture*, by Perry T. Rathbone.

Oct. 25: *Sixty Years of Excavation at Troy*, by Carl Blegen, University of Cincinnati.

Nov. 1: *The Dilemma of the Modern Artist*, by John D. Morse.

Nov. 8: *The English Cathedral, a Study of Folkways*, by Parker Lesley.

Nov. 15: No lecture. *Opening, Michigan Artists Exhibition*.

Nov. 22: *American Art in Retrospect*, by Clyde H. Burroughs.

- Nov. 29: *The Temple of Bel at Palmyra*, by Henri Seyrig, Director of Antiquities in French Syria.
 Dec. 6: *Rembrandt, the Etcher*, by Isabel Weadock.
 Dec. 13: *The Greek Revival in American Architecture*, by Perry T. Rathbone.

LECTURES IN THE GALLERIES

(chairs provided)

A SURVEY OF THE COLLECTIONS, Thursday afternoons at 3:00; Sunday afternoons at 2:30.

- Oct. 6 and 9: *The Art of the Cave Dwellers etc.*
 Oct. 13 and 16: *Egypt and Mesopotamia*
 Oct. 20 and 23: *The Gallery of Greek Art*
 Oct. 27 and 30: *The Art of the Near East*
 Nov. 3 and 6: *Far Eastern Art: China*
 Nov. 10 and 13: *Far Eastern Art: Japan*
 Nov. 17 and 20: *American Art before Columbus*
 Dec. 1 and 4: *The Art of the Roman Empire*
 Dec. 8 and 11: *Early Christian Art*
 Dec. 15 and 18: *The Gothic Style in Northern Europe*

SPECIAL TALKS BY THE CURATORS

Friday afternoons at 3:00.

- Oct. 7: *Rugs of the Near East*, by Adele Coulin Weibel.
 Oct. 14: *The Enjoyment of Prints*, by Isabel Weadock.
 Oct. 21: *The Imaginative Quality in Dutch Art*, by E. P. Richardson.
 Oct. 28: *The Museum's Tapestries*, by Adele Coulin Weibel.
 Nov. 4: *From Old Bruegel to Rubens*, by E. P. Richardson.
 Nov. 11: *The Golden Age of Florence and the Rise of the Venetian School*, by Perry T. Rathbone.
 Nov. 18: *Eighteenth Century and Early Republican Painting in America*, by Parker Lesley.
 Dec. 2: *Romanticism and Realism in American Painting*, by Parker Lesley.
 Dec. 9: *The Collection of Drawings*, by Ernst Scheyer.

LECTURES AVAILABLE

The members of the staff are glad to arrange with groups to give lectures free of charge if in the museum, or for a fee outside the museum. The following are some of the lecture subjects available.

By Isabel Weadock:

How to Enjoy Prints
Rembrandt
Landscape Etchings

By Adele Coulin Weibel:

The Narrative Element in Gothic Tapestries
Lucca and Venice and the Evolution of Silk Weaving
Chinoiserie: The Blending of East and West in the 18th Century

By Parker Lesley:

The English Cathedral, a Study in Folkways
Space and Time and Classic Art
Landscape in Classic Painting

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<i>Curator of Prints</i>	Isabel Weadock
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